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# Terrorism Is as Terrorism Does

DUSTY: How about Pereira?

DORIS: What about Pereira?

I don't care.

—T.S. Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*

Remember all those editorials on the opposite page about terrorism and its menace to civilized values that we all hold dear? Remember that one, not so long ago, that they gave the catchy title "The Bombing of the West" to—all about the relentless terror campaign waged against the democracies by all the usual suspects? Of course you remember. How could you forget, since the one merit of Wall Street Journal editorials to which all can attest is that they make themselves absolutely

## Viewpoint

by Alexander Cockburn

clear. Never clearer, be it said, than on the topic of "terrorism." The Wall Street Journal disapproves of terrorism.

So naturally, as France's guilt in the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior, the ship belonging to the environmentalist group Greenpeace, became increasingly manifest, I awaited with interest the considered views of The Wall Street Journal. On the face of it, the sinking seemed to be a terrorist act: Two bombs, one death—adding up, one would surmise, to a fairly thoroughgoing attempt on the part of the French government to terrorize those who would challenge its practice of testing nuclear devices in the South Pacific.

All through September the French gave ground. The Tricot report, designed to exculpate the French secret service, quickly became inoperative. Then, just as the French government was nerving itself to 'fess up, the Journal showed the way to the unmodified hang-out posture, in an editorial on Sept. 20 with another catchy title, "The Wogs at Tahiti." The WSJ solution to the question of guilt allocation was breath-

takingly simple: Blame New Zealand.

New Zealand! Of course. How could we have missed it? The editorial laid it out, fair and square: "Nonetheless, the bottom line in the Greenpeace episode is that New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange wants nuclear tests to leave the South Pacific, and to take the French with them." The writer went on to make some dutiful obeisance to "alleged French complicity" but then let *le chat* come frisking out of the bag with the thought that "However stupid an event may be uncovered, France has not been moved to similar desperation in the harbors of more supportive nations."

Indulgent words, these: "stupid" and "desperation," moving us right along the conveyor belt from "third-rate burglary" to "third-rate sinking." Poor old France, irked by New Zealand's hospitality to a bunch of tofu-eating peaceniks, has no alternative but to unleash a budget of \$500,000 and no less than three teams of terr—, uh, security specialists, clamp two bombs to the hull of the ship and send the con-founded thing straight to the bottom.

And this forgiving spirit from a page that edged in black its editorial in memory of the U.S. serviceman murdered in the recent TWA hostage affair. There was a man aboard the Greenpeace murdered by the French. He was a Portuguese photographer, his name was Fernando Pereira, and he leaves a wife and two children.

At this point we must welcome Jeane Kirkpatrick to our story. Six days after the Journal editorial about "Wogs at Tahiti" ("Frogs at Tahiti" wouldn't have been respectful of the *force de frappe*), the press reported that the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations had discussed the Greenpeace sinking with Vice President Bush and apparently found an important distinction between international terrorism and the action of the French intelligence service, in that "the French clearly did not intend to attack civilians and bystanders and maim, torture or kill."

I'd like to hear her outline this view to Mrs. Pereira. Let's see: The French government authorizes the attack on the Greenpeace ship. The ship is manned by civilians. The ship is not simply disabled by one explosive charge attached to its propeller. To the contrary, two bombs are used, with no warning given either before or between the two explosions. When bombers don't want to maim or kill, they use the telephone. One civilian is killed and a great many more would either have been maimed or killed, had not a strategy meeting of the Greenpeace crew been moved ashore at the last minute. If this isn't terrorism, what is it?

Perhaps Mrs. Kirkpatrick's point was that since the French government is not in the habit of exporting terrorism, it should be given the benefit of the doubt in the case of the Rainbow Warrior. The problem here is that the French secret intelligence service has been practicing terrorism for years. Mrs. Kirkpatrick can bring her discriminating moral intelligence to bear on such episodes as the poisoning of a Cameroonian opposition leader in Geneva in 1960; the abduction of the Algerian Ben Bella in 1956; the kidnapping of the Moroccan Ben Barka in 1965, and his subsequent delivery to the late and unlamented Col. Oufkir who tortured and then murdered him.

All the way through the Watergate scandal Paris-based correspondents of U.S. papers used to file stories reporting French nonchalance about the affair. The French found it incomprehensible that the state, in the form of President Nixon, should be discommoded by a concern for the rule of law. And now the U.S. correspondents of the French newspapers will be able to report similar insouciance, at least on the part of the Journal and Mrs. Kirkpatrick, about the murderous deeds of agents of the French government. What Mrs. Pereira might conclude from all this is that *raison d'etat*, or "reason of state," is the most terrorist category of all.